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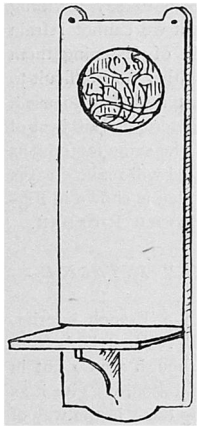
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# THE HOUSE

## FRET-SAWING.

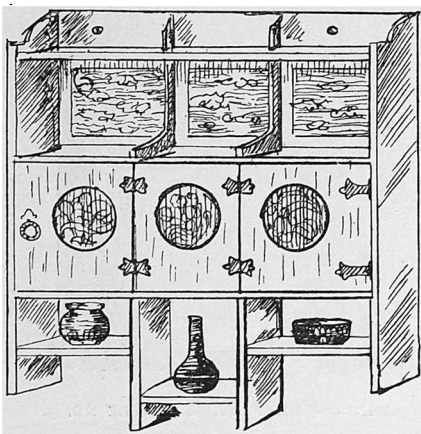
### A SERIES OF PANELS TO BE APPLIED TO FURNITURE.



EVEN its stoutest champions would hardly venture to deny that the craft of fret-sawing has fallen into not altogether undeserved neglect in many households. More especially is this true of artistic people, those who have some notion of the fundamental principles of decorative art. Nor is this neglect hard to explain; for in a method that promises complete success, only when the design has been kept strictly within the limits imposed by the material, the wildest devices have been attempted. In no art work is the distinction between pictures and ornament—literal reproduction of natural forms

and conventional ornament based upon nature—more needful to insist than in this. In all applied art the moment a surface becomes part of an object intended for use, whether that use be merely part of a building or a movable article, it ceases to be a picture; or, to put it more truly, it should be no longer a picture, for, alas that it be so, but this axiom of design is disregarded not only by the lowest class of decorators, but too often by those who should know better. If this holds true of a painting on a vase, or a panel of a building, where color, relief, and all the accessories of picture art are possible, how much more imperative should it be in the limit of fret-cutting! For in this work the finished design is not even a silhouette, the cut edges insist on adding a sort of perspective, that nevertheless, unlike the surfaces of carved ornament, must be a hindrance to all forms that essay to be transcripts of nature. Yet portraits, landscapes, naturally treated human figures and animals—all and everything has been parodied in fret-cutting, to the degradation of a really pleasant minor art.

In the designs which this paper aims to describe, the effort to preserve natural forms, but in a purely conventional way, has been attempted, with what success it becomes me not to say; but I can say that at least the method is the



HANGING CABINET, WITH FRET-SAWN PANELS.

true one, however far the examples fail to do it justice.

But the count against fret-work is not based solely

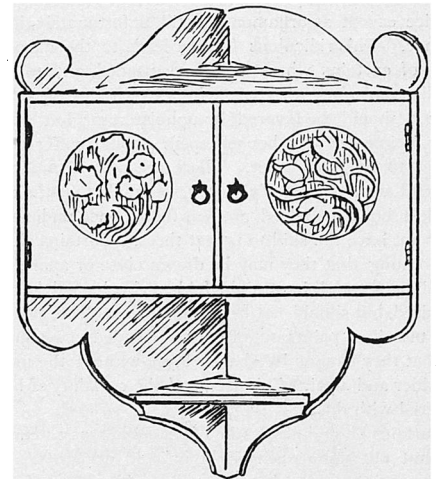
upon the unsuitability of its more widely known patterns. There is a common-sense view, equally worthy of notice, and yet another aspect of its decorative treatment. To take this last first. It may be conceded that all satisfactory ornament applied to a movable object such as fret-work should be so designed that the whole is ornamental as well as its separate parts. To illustrate my meaning: if a bracket of excellent design otherwise and faultless workmanship has yet a shape so formless that at a distance it is a mere blot upon the wall, it cannot be good. There is no reason why the whole shape when seen from a distance that loses all its details should not yet yield a graceful outline. We have all seen such work that had a vapid, unmeaning edge, of no interest whatever, once you had ceased to see its details. If you cut to the outline of its features an ordinary woodcut of a landscape, and look at it from the back, the cut-out piece of paper is an inchoate mass of curves and notches of no beauty.

For this reason, as well as adding to the stability of the work, it is best that a good border of uncut wood should, as it were, enclose the design everywhere. This point need not always be insisted upon to its bitter end; finials and crestings and various features may be left unprotected by this border. But looking to the weakness of the same wood, the rule, in spite of its exceptions, should yet be held binding.

Now for the common-sense view; and sundered as artists and ordinary folk are by all sorts of prejudices and

beauty in themselves and excellent decorative additions to all sorts of things.

The diagrams show various structures to be made, re-



SMALL CORNER CABINET, WITH FRET-SAWN PANELS.

lying solely on these fret-work panels (whether of wood or metal) for the decoration.

The cut in the margin shows a useful bracket. Since whatever is carried thereon necessarily hides the carving, this is placed at the top, with an effect not displeasing in itself, and more reasonable than the more usual method. The sketch opposite is for a small corner cupboard.

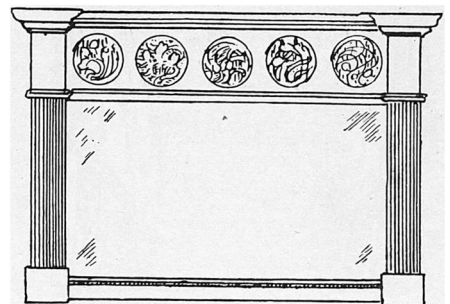
The one on the left hand is for a hanging whatnot with shelves, and one door hinged in three parts, to give a little freshness to a rather hackneyed but always popular odd piece of furniture.

The other designs are for overmantels, from a very simple kind to those requiring some careful joinery. These too are explained by the sketches.

As fret-work is rarely pleasant when polished, walnut, oak or other dark woods are the best to use for these things.

One very uncommon and yet beautiful treatment is to chase a light closely grained wood, such as birch, and stain it a grass green with transparent dye. Then when polished, the flickering lights of the pattern of the grain of the wood enrich the wood wonderfully.

For all these purposes, wood stained a dull black is peculiarly economic, for then almost any variety may



MIRROR, WITH FRET-SAWN MEDALLIONS.

beliefs, yet a reasonable objection is usually worth regarding. And when such say of all fret-work that it is fragile and undurable, a mere dust-collecting nuisance, there is some truth in the sweeping assertion.

In place of fret-work completely forming one article, panels of fret-cut wood, inserted in ordinary joiner's work, not only concede a part of the opposition, but are, as a rule, more decorative. For too much ornament defeats its own end; not only does it soon become meretricious and vulgar, but it bewilders in place of pleasing. A few panels of good design, be they painted or carved, a well-arranged moulding, or a little ornament emphasizing the salient portions of a work, decorate such work far beyond a medley of so-called decoration lavished indiscriminately over the whole thing.

In these designs, in place of giving the pattern for one use only, a series of panels, with diagrams suggesting their after-use, has been the plan chosen. In these panels, the ornament being well protected, the feature of strength has been little regarded; but if worked in wood they must be of the sort known as three-ply. But metal, while hardly more difficult to work, is so little used that it is hoped some will boldly try these in thin sheet brass or copper, and so produce decorative work that gives a little finishing by the graver here and there. Just a few scratches to bring out parts that appear to overlap, or suggest the veins of leaves and the marks of flowers, will result in objects of some little

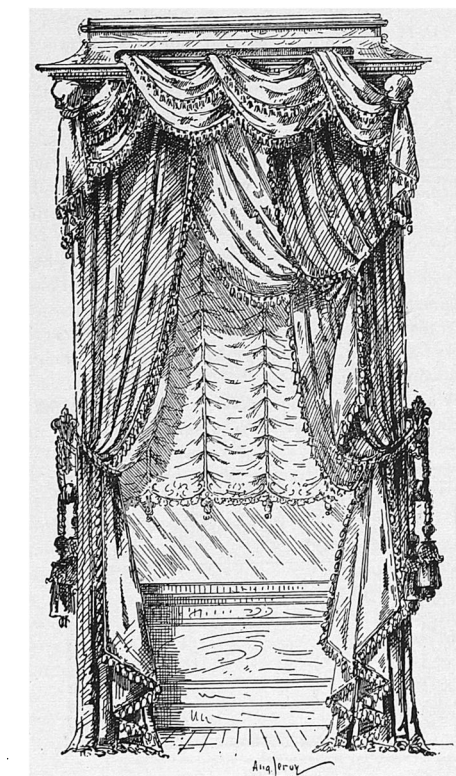
be used in the same article, and yet the final staining gives a complete finish to the work. But since every man's taste and need varies, a more detailed description is needless, for those who intend to manufacture have often a foregone idea, so that they shape to their own ends the instruction provided. GLEESON WHITE.

## THE ARRANGEMENT OF CURTAINS.

THE absurdity of most of the fixed arrangements of curtains adopted by French decorators and their followers in other countries is as apparent as that of the old-fashioned coiffures which were the pride and the torment of our great-grandmothers. The fashion of arranging the hair in tall structures stiffened with paste and powder and intended to last for several days or a week has happily gone out never to return; but the almost equally barbarous practice of permanently draping curtains and portières, so that their folds become loaded with dust and they are precluded from rendering any service except as ornament, is still, unfortunately, in existence. This ridiculous fashion leads to the introduction of curtains where none are needed, and to their duplication where they are. It is easy to see, therefore, why it should be favored by upholsterers; but not so easy to imagine why housekeepers should suffer themselves to be ruled by it. There are several modes of tasteful arrangement of drapery, so simple that the most modest housewife need not fear that if once undone she may not have the skill to repeat them. Curtains should be so hung that they may be drawn close or apart, may be allowed to fall in straight folds or be looped back as required, but should not be gathered up with stout cords and tassels at points out of reach, or nailed in set shapes so that they cannot be shaken loose without the use of a ladder and a pair of nippers, and the certainty of being covered with dust.

Curtains should always be of use either as screens or to shut out unnecessary light or cold draughts. The most sensible way of hanging them is by means of small unobtrusive metal rings, strung on a metal or wooden rod, which need seldom be more than one inch in diameter. The chance of too much air blowing in between this rod and the top of the window frame is, if the window sashes are well hung and fastened, too small to be of any real account. In general the wooden boxing, or so-called window cornice, with its dependent lambrequin or valance may be dispensed with, saving much trouble from dust and dirt, and doing away with what is commonly a most disagreeable feature as well as most of the objectionable formal arrangements of drapery which distinguish modern French interiors. But if continued in use from habit or for the sake of its comfortable ap-

pearance, the valance should be rather plain and not developed so that it may look like an extra curtain intended for show only.

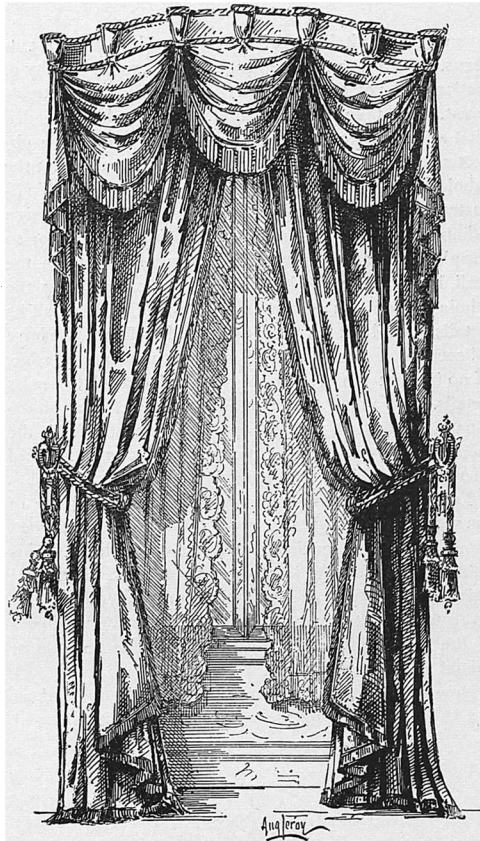


WINDOW DRAPERY. EXAMPLE NO. 1.

pearance, the valance should be rather plain and not developed so that it may look like an extra curtain intended for show only.

Thus, of all of our seven illustrations, we would much prefer the last as being in all respects sensible and,

at the same time, artistic. We would rather use a somewhat smaller rod, which would not require such heavy supports, and would reduce the knobs at its ends greatly. The mouldings of the window casing, not shown in Mr. Leroy's sketch, should be designed with



WINDOW DRAPERY. EXAMPLE NO. 2.

reference to the fact that the supporting brackets are to be visible, and should afford them a sufficient plane surface to start from, as is done for wall brackets and candelabra. The third window on this page has a good valance ornamented in appliqué, and with a fringe which presents a rather stiff appearance, but is preferable to the draped valance in this column. This last derives most of its superior elegance from the better draping of the curtains proper, and the introduction of lace curtains behind them.

In Figure 7 we find already the permanent looping up of drapery carried to an unjustifiable excess, for the curtain to the right is meant to be retained in its present position, that to the left only being of real utility. If a valance is used, there can be no particular objection to giving it an agreeable curvature at top, as in Figure 2. It can very seldom be arranged so as even to appear to carry out the lines of the cornice of the room, and it may, therefore, be treated quite apart from that member. For the same reason, the valance itself may be cut into lambrequin shape at the bottom, as in Figure 5, a very good example, if the rococo ornament at the top be disregarded. This valance is also ornamented in appliqué and with a simple fringe, and will suggest a number of variations suitable for the most elegantly furnished drawing-room or boudoir.

These scalloped lambrequins were in great vogue during the Renaissance, and the periods of Louis XIV. and Louis XV. and some of the styles of the latter period were very elaborate. This it was, probably, which led to the introduction of curtains permanently draped in the upper part, a substitute which, at first, presented a less artificial appearance. If one will compare the drapery in Figure 4 with the lambrequin in Figure 7, which, though modern and intended for a Turkish smoking-room, is not more elaborate than many Renaissance and rococo patterns, he will, we think, incline to favor the former. But, in reality, the style is bad in principle, and it quickly lost all appearance of simplicity. Figure 1 is given as an example of extreme bad taste in this direction. Here the wooden or other solid boxing is cut through in such a manner as to deprive the whole arrangement of any pretence of utility. In the place of

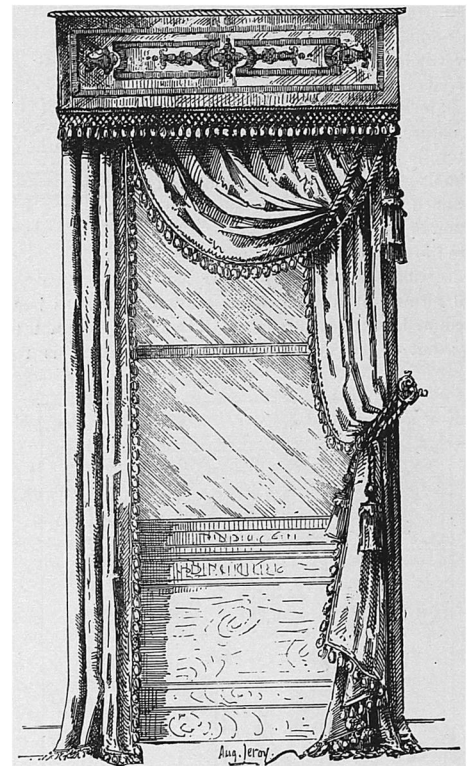
the sensible valances of Figures 7 and 5 or the elegantly looped-up drapery of Figure 4, we have a heavily fringed scarf clumsily twisted about a rod provided for that and no other purpose. The doubled curtains are also caught back at one side in a manner at once ugly and foolish; and one of those senseless festooned blinds so common a few years ago is introduced, and heavy cords and tassels, looking as though no feminine hands could undo them, give the whole affair an appearance as though it knew it was ugly, and was determined to face it out.

We do not purpose in this article to say anything about the materials of curtains, but we cannot refrain from condemning the usual mode of fastening them back by tasselled cords, which are either very difficult to undo or else a mere sham. A better plan is to use a broad stiff band of some suitable material. But best of all is a very wide ribbon or strip of the same material as the curtain itself, which when knotted will make creases harmonious with its folds. This plan is shown in Figure 4.

ROGER RIORDAN.

## A MODERN "LOUIS SEIZE" INTERIOR.

THE drawing which we give of a French interior, modelled principally upon the Louis XVI. style, is from a dwelling recently erected, and although we do not in all particulars recommend it for imitation, we give it as a fair example of what is now being done in the way of French eighteenth-century interiors. The parquet, it will be seen, is perfectly plain, and yet is not wholly covered by rugs. The walls, divided by a dado rail at one third their height, are panelled on the frieze, the panels being separated by ornamental pilasters. The frieze, as well as the cornice, may be in plaster, treated in cream and white, or gold. The ceiling in the farther room (a boudoir) is painted with groups of cupids, birds and flowers against a pale blue sky. The surrounding frame is richly gilt and the stencilled ornament is in ivory white, reddish brown and gold. The brown is used only as an outline in defining the forms. The panels are painted with arabesques and trophies alternately, in pale tints on a white ground; the mouldings and carved accessories being picked out with gold. The canapé at the rear is in white and gilt wood; the drapery in very pale rose silk attached to the pedestal



WINDOW DRAPERY. EXAMPLE NO. 3.

in onyx and ormolu, bearing a statuette group of Cupid and Venus and in appearance only to the frame of the medallion at top. Though presenting a very artificial air, it may easily be taken down and changed. We cannot commend the drapery in festoons of the centre table



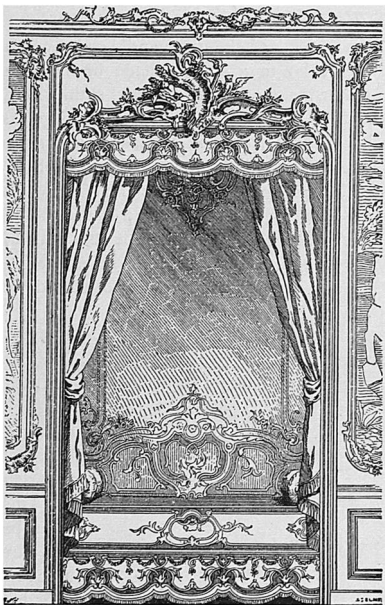
nor, indeed, that object as a whole. The design of the room is altogether lacking in the sobriety and the beauty of proportions characteristic of the best examples of the Louis XVI. style. To carry it out at any moderate expense would necessarily imply the employment of all the makeshifts by which modern decorators and upholsterers dispense with the costly and artistic finish necessary to the style at its best.

Usually in modern houses furnished in what is now called the Louis Seize style, the imitation of interiors of that period is carried no further than the panelling of the walls, the upholstering of the furniture with damasks in light colors, and the introduction of a few screens and other articles in imitation of "verniss Martin." But, to have its full effect, Louis Seize furniture should be shown against a tapestried wall. Painted tapestries may answer or light-colored cotton or damask stuffs; but in a drawing-room or other richly furnished room the bright colors of the furniture need some support. Walls of white and gold are sure to give a chilly and uncomfortable look. The simplicity of the style is, indeed, well calculated to deceive the economically minded. It is seldom remembered until too late that these plain mouldings must be hand wrought; that these simple arabesques should be woven in tapestry or artistically painted; that

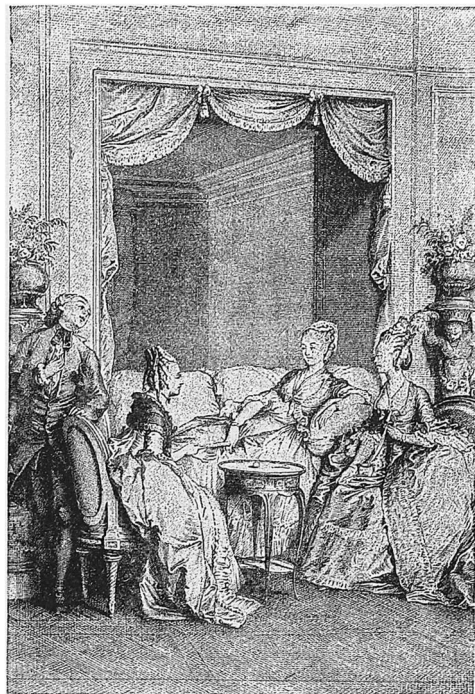
day. Nothing can be further removed from the style of the Louis Seize style, which is not *the* style for tired nor for very lazy people. A few fauteuils sufficiently com-

terior decoration, Rousseau de la Rottiere, the design of which, reproduced by us, is taken from his sketch-book, may serve us as an antidote to our modern Louis Seize drawing-room. The room was executed for Madam de Serilly, one of the household of Marie Antoinette, and is now in the South Kensington Museum. It is square. The panels have rectangular borders, and are painted with arabesques in camaieu. There is a mantel-piece of white marble, the sculpture of which is attributed to Clodion. The ceiling is painted with a mythological subject attributed to Fragonard. All the details are taken from ancient Roman architecture, yet the effect of the ensemble would never be taken for that of a Roman interior. This Rousseau was one of two brothers to whom much of the beautiful ornamental work at the Trianon palaces and the palace of Versailles is due.

Work of this character will, of course, be quite beyond the means, and perhaps the inclinations of most of our readers. Ceilings painted with mythological subjects, arabesques delicately modelled or painted by hand, panels filled with tapestry, really artistic bronzes and furniture are for the very few. Yet there are many who will not be daunted by our declaration that the Louis Seize

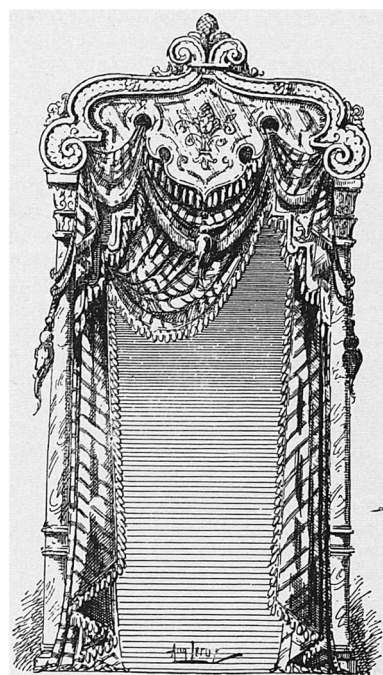


LOUIS QUINZE ALCOVE BED DRAPERY.



LITTLE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY BOUDOIR. AFTER A PRINT BY MOREAU, THE YOUNGER.

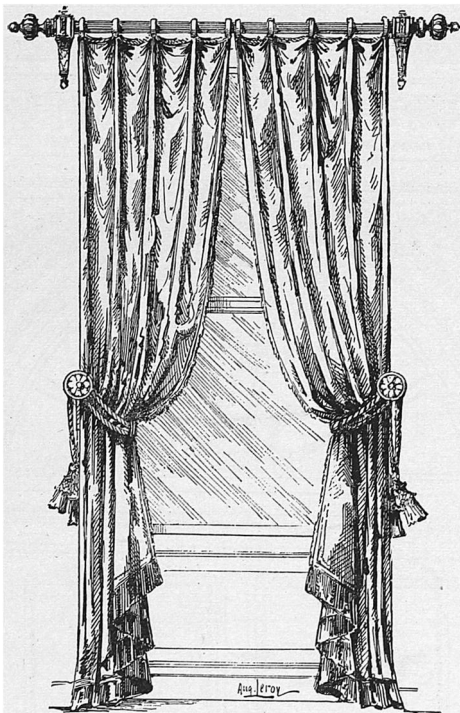
fortable for persons who are not tired out are admissible; but they should not look as if inviting slumber. When our ancestors wished to sleep they went to bed. Let the back, seat, and, in one or two, the arms be comfortably upholstered; but avoid cushions, puffings, festoons and fringes. The modern concession that a person may, for a moment, take up a lounging or sprawling attitude provided he does not make it habitual, must, however, be recognized; and everybody should have the opportunity to make himself, for a while, as much at ease as very old people were allowed to do in our grandmother's days—but not more. Coquettish and comfortable bergeres,



DRAPERY IN "TURKISH" STYLE.

those light tones of color take for granted a certain leisurely elegance and hosts of servants. It is, therefore, little to be wondered at that upholsterers, who know all this, but who wish to keep down their bills to such sums as their customers will pay, without at the same time cutting down their profits, have invented this modern Louis Seize, at once bare and over ornamented, in which, for the refined and costly simplicity of the real thing, they substitute twice as much "decoration" as is requisite, but inappropriate, badly designed and cheaply executed. It should be borne in mind that people in the last century did not at all times and in all places insist upon luxury or even comfort to that degree that we do. Those in comparatively moderate circumstances might then furnish one or two rooms with real elegance as cheaply, to say the least, as we can a whole house according to our ideas of comfort and fashion. If we wish a Louis Seize interior, then, we should make up our minds to get but little show at great expense, or, to what will seem to us at first, a somewhat Spartan severity.

But while the treatment of the room itself may be whatever the owner wishes—severe or costly, pure or mixed—it is difficult to get furniture that will not be of the latter sort; manufacturers of textiles do, indeed, reproduce the old designs with some degree of exactness, but they do not always choose the best; and the furniture makers usually follow mixed models and add to them other confusing features drawn from the Renaissance and from modern styles indiscriminately. The Louis Seize has a character of its own, and should not be loaded with Queen Anne or Georgian or Empire additions. Above all things, the purchaser should avoid the French stuffed, frilled and flounced furniture of to-



SIMPLE MODERN WINDOW DRAPERY.

canapés and fauteuils, which we have already illustrated, should be sufficient.

A portion of a boudoir by that excellent master in in-

style, without these things, will be apt to look to them barren of interest, and lacking color. To keep them from falling into the extreme bad taste which we have already denounced, let us say that a compromise may be made between the strict requirements of the style and the wishes and exigencies of the modern house owner. But it should be regarded, from the first, as a compromise, and in carrying it out one should be consistent. Let it be understood, then, that the wood-work may be simplified to the point of approaching our own colonial style, simpler than which ornamental wood-work can hardly be; and that, at the same time, we may use richly colored materials more generously than our ancestors did, and so as, in part, to make up for the enforced absence of the pictorial and other artistic decorations spoken of above. We may, for instance—still keeping to the parlor or drawing-room as our particular example, though what we say of it will apply to all parts of the house—we may put Turkish rugs on the floor, introduce, but very carefully, a little stained glass in our windows, and ornament our shelves with the charming productions of the modern Japanese potter or worker in bronze. We may go so far as to use mahogany or even stained cherry instead of the white-painted wood-work of the last century. Indeed, we will be lucky if we are not forced to use a deep-toned wood to render less evident the poverty of design in our mouldings. But a rich-colored dado will necessitate deeper tones throughout the room, and these, again, will enable us to introduce modern materials—cheaper textile, for instance, instead of tapestry and brocade for curtains, and papers instead of textiles of any sort for the walls.

This, in fact, would be our answer to any one who

should ask us, "How shall I have something like a Louis Seize drawing-room without great cost and without garishness?" We should say, Simplify the forms as much as possible, use cheaper materials, but in deeper and richer tones. The poverty of the materials and of original design will partly be hidden, partly atoned for by the deeper coloring. We must prepare, too, for the reception of pictures, which, with us, are very likely to be numerous, and to have an effect on the ensemble of a room very much greater than that of the few portraits and mythological paintings admitted over the doors, mirrors and mantel in a true Louis Seize room. A soft tone of brownish pink or olive or orange will be likely to suit. If paper is used, it should have a small pattern, preferably outlined in gold or relieved by gold dots. No attempt should be made to dispose it in panels, as these would require to be filled with arabesque designs, leaving so much surface plain that the poor texture of the paper would be evident. But an entire wall may be regarded as a single panel to the extent of running a line of moulding from dado to cornice in the corners, or, better yet, cutting off the corners by pilasters or panels in the same wood that is used in the dado. In the latter case, however, special treatment will be required to make these "corners" harmonize with the cornice, and the best plan is to put the ornamental work of the cornice down a little way on the panel, and to gild it.

#### PAINTED TAPESTRY PANEL.

THE elegant panel by Jean Lepautre given herewith would make a beautiful fire-screen properly carried out in tapestry painting. It would need careful enlarging. Use the finest ribbed woollen canvas of the best quality. Stretch the canvas carefully and evenly in a wooden frame. Having previously pricked the design, pounce it on, and then secure the drawing with a fine-pointed crayon. This done, beat out the pounce powder.

No background is needed. Paint the entire design in shaded gold and the figure in monochrome. Begin by scrubbing in the lightest tint thoroughly over every part of the design except the figure, with yellow, much diluted with medium and water. Medium must in all cases be mixed with the colors used. Shade this when dry with yellow sanguine (burnt Sienna) and indigo mixed. For the figure, leave the high lights untouched, and shade with gray and brown. Use very small tapestry brushes for modelling the features. Let the painting, when finished, be properly fixed by steam. The process not only fixes but enriches the painting, giving to the work an old look closely resembling that of woven tapestries.

IRIDESCENT colors in metals may be produced in various ways. It is sufficient to engrave them with very fine parallel lines, which may be arranged in patterns. Steel and tin may be colored by heat; silver by sulphuretted hydrogen.

The tints obtained in all these latter cases are not of the richest, being orange brown, dull purple, violet and blue.

It is claimed for Spurr's veneers that they will stand heat and moisture without warping or cracking. They cer-



PANEL OF LOUIS XIV. PERIOD. BY JEAN LEPAUTRE.

tainly offer a beautiful surface, whether polished or simply oiled. A considerable variety of rich natural tints from pale yellow to deep red may be used, and the natural grain and veining of the wood is, of course, far superior to any possible imitation. The question whether they

are not liable to be mistaken for solid panelling, and whether they are not, therefore, to be pronounced a sham, is one which depends on the manner in which they are used. In our opinion, they should be put up not like solid wood panelling, but like panels of stamped leather—that is, with much slighter mouldings and without any regularly constructed framework. In this way there would be no possibility of mistake, and it would have the further advantage, very considerable in the circumstances, of lessening the cost of the revetement still more.

## Needlework.

#### PORTIÈRE OR CURTAIN DECORATION.

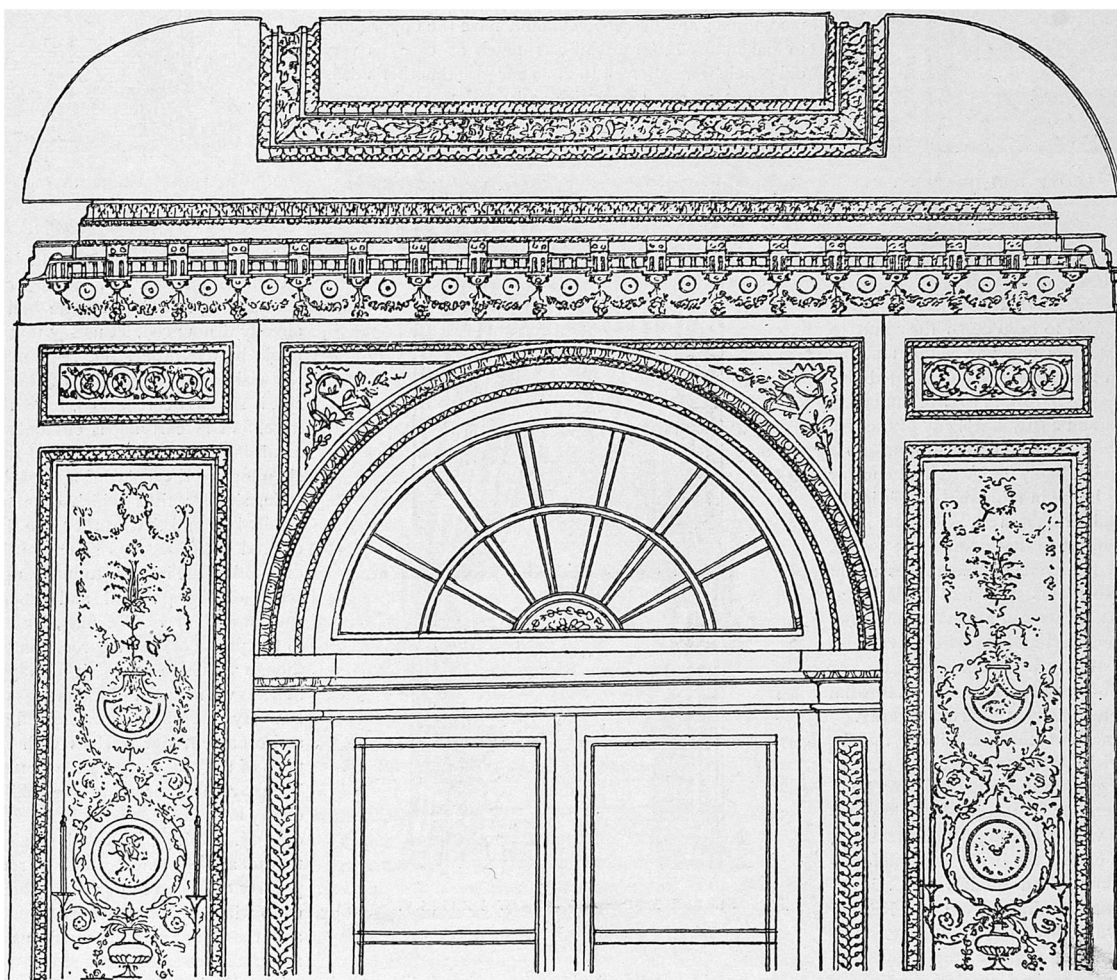
THE bold and striking designs by Mr. Gleason White given in the supplement pages for fret-sawn work are admirably suited for a portière, if carried out on art satin or Bolton sheeting in tinting and embroidery—a style now much in vogue. Repeat the border and let it run all round the curtain, or across the top and bottom only if preferred. You can transfer the design either by pricking and pouncing or by means of colored transfer paper. The disks can be placed at irregular intervals all over the curtain.

Tint the ground of the disks and border with a good contrasting color or a darker shade of the same color chosen. For instance, on an old gold satin a rich brown would look very well, especially if the design itself be touched up with a pale gold bronze powder mixed with the medium prepared for it. Outline the whole of the design with Japanese gold cord. The effect will be rich and handsome. If it is not desired to use the gold and Japanese cord, then cable silk can be substituted; or, to be very economical, flax thread. In either case the flowers must then also be tinted to accord with the ground.

There is yet another way of treating the designs. The borders and disks can be made of satin, tinted and outlined in either style already suggested and then appliquéd to flax velours, furniture velvet, plush or any other rich material. This method will be found more tedious, but certainly richer in effect.

The material chosen must of course harmonize in style with the room for which the portière is destined.

EASEL SCARFS are made of soft silk, and drape gracefully over an ornamental easel in a drawing-room or library. Cream white Florentine silk or India gauze are suitable materials. The design given on page 86 may be either painted, or painted in combination, with heavy outline embroidery, which is effective and rapidly worked. The pale rose coloring of the marsh-mallow flowers will look well on the creamy white ground. If it is to be embroid-



SUGGESTION FOR MODERN "LOUIS SEIZE" DECORATION. FROM A DRAWING BY ROUSSEAU DE LA ROTTIÈRE. THIS IS ACTUALLY CARRIED OUT IN THE SOUTH KENSINGTON MUSEUM.